GHOST RIDER

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Marvel's best
supernatural
super-hero
comics.”
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PERCY
SMITH
JUNIOR
VALENZA

MARVEL

SHADOW COUNTRY

GHOST RIDER
SHADOW COUNTRY

When innocent blood is spilled, a ***Spirit of Vengeance*** is born,
and **JOHNNY BLAZE** finds himself transformed!

Marvel Comics presents. . .

GHOST RIDER

"Shadow Country"

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GHOST RIDER: VENGEANCE FOREVER
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NUMBER SIX

“The Exorcism of Johnny Blaze”

NEAR HELL'S BACKBONE. UTAH.
MY LIFE--AS THE GHOST RIDER--BEGAN WITH A *BETRAYAL.*
VROOOM
THE DEVIL CARESSED ME WITH ONE HAND, SHOVED A HOT COAL INTO MY HEART WITH THE OTHER.
BECAUSE I KEEP GETTING BURNED...
...I'VE GOT IT IN MY HEAD I CAN'T TRUST ANY PLACE OR ANYBODY. NOT EVEN *MYSELF.*
BUT SOMETIMES LIFE WILL GO AND PROVE YOU WRONG.
I NEED YOU ALL TO GET THE @#$% OUT OF HERE.
RIGHT NOW.
SNIKT

MORE WAYS THAN ONE, **WOLVERINE** AND I HAVE TRAVELED THE SAME ROADS.
ROADS LITTERED WITH BONES AND OILED WITH BLOOD.
GET OUT OF MY BAR, MUTIE!
WE HATE OURSELVES FOR WHERE WE'VE BEEN, WHAT WE'VE DONE.
-SIGH-
WE'RE TRAITORS OF HISTORY.
YOU HEAR ME?!
WE WANT TO ***FORGET.***
BUT WE KNOW THAT WE'RE ONLY TRYING TO DO BETTER BECAUSE WE ***REMEMBER.***

BUT THE PAIN...
BLAM
KRAK
GAAA!
...THE PAIN INSIDE US...
...SOMETIMES IT'S TOO MUCH TO SWALLOW DOWN AND WE HAVE TO SHARE IT WITH THOSE WHO DESERVE IT.
COLD
I SAID YOU NEED TO LEAVE.
I'M...I'M GOING...
THAT'S GOOD...
AIIEEE!
...BECAUSE YOU DON'T WANT TO BE HERE FOR WHAT'S NEXT.

YOU HOLD ON THERE, BLAZE.
ONE FOR ME.
ONE FOR YOU.
-HACK HACK!-
GET NUMB...
SNIKT
...'CUZ THIS IS GONNA HURT.
GONNA DO MY BEST WITH THIS BACK-ALLEY SURGERY.
CHK-CHK
FWOOSH
FIRE'S A PURIFIER, BUT HONESTLY...
HRRRN...
...I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE GOING TO LIVE THROUGH THIS.

BUT IF YOU DO DIE... YOU'LL STILL BE BETTER OFF.

THE UNKNOWN CEMETERY.
SOMETHING IS HAPPENING.
SOMETHING THAT THREATENS THE PLAN.
SKRIK SKIK
I SUMMON YOU.
BRING ME MY ANSWERS.
CHUFF

ALABASTER...
YOU WERE NOT TO REVEAL YOUR TRUE NATURE, **AGENT WHILMER,** UNLESS YOU HAD NO CHOICE.
I DID AS YOU SAID.
I WATCHED. I WATCHED AS LONG AS I COULD.
BUT ONCE THE TWO OF THEM CAME TOGETHER-- HRRR...
ONCE THEY REALIZED THEY WERE NOT ENEMIES BUT **ALLIES** UNITED AGAINST US...
...IT NEEDED TO **END.**

YOU DID WELL TO BRING THEM HERE.
THE COUNCIL WILL REWARD YOU. SO WILL OUR *MASTER.*
I'LL NEED YOU TO RETURN TO THE BUREAU NOW.
CARRY ON WITH YOUR WORK. EXPRESS RELUCTANCE, BUT SHOW NO INCOMPETENCE.
REPORT TO THE F.B.I. DIRECTOR THAT YOU HAVE WITNESSED ***NO*** EVIDENCE OF THIS SO-CALLED SURGE IN SUPERNATURAL ACTIVITY.
TALIA WARROAD WAS MORE THAN MISTAKEN. SHE WAS DELUSIONAL, SICK IN THE HEAD. THAT'S WHAT YOU SHOULD SAY TO HIM.
AND WHAT SHOULD I SAY HAPPENED TO HER?
TELL THEM THE TRUTH.
SHE DIED.

DOING MY BEST HERE, BLAZE.
SCREEEEE
AAAIIIEEEE!
I'VE KNOWN YOU A LONG TIME.
YOU ALWAYS WERE A SICK BASTARD.
BUT *THIS* IS SOMETHING ELSE.
GAAAAA!!!

I DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO CALL IT A CANCER...
SNIKT
...OR A POSSESSION.
SLICH
SPLAK
BUT THE PAIN ENDS TONIGHT.
LO-LOGAN.
KILL ME!
KILL--KAK!

I JUST NEED TO CUT IT OUT OF YOU.
YOU--YOU CAN'T.
IT'S *EVERYWHERE.*
THERE'D BE NOTHING LEFT OF ME.
I'M *IT,* AND IT'S *ME.*

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT, BLAZE.
SPLRT
YOU'VE NEVER BEEN ONE TO ROLL OVER.
SPLKKSS
YOU'RE A FIGHTER.
FIGHT WITH ME.
HRRRM...
YOU'RE NOT ALONE.
WE'LL FIGHT THIS THING *TOGETHER*.

HARRR...
THAK
SHING
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS @#$%.
LAST CALL, BUB.
YOU GO HOME...
...OR YOU GO DOWN.
SHK
SHK

OKAY... THIS ISN'T WORKING.
I THINK I'M DONE TALKIN' TO JOHNNY.
I WANT THE *GHOST RIDER.*
DO YA HEAR ME, RIDER?!
THAT'S WHAT STOKES YOUR FIRE, RIGHT?!
WHEN THE *INNOCENT* ARE IN DANGER, YOU GET RILED UP?
WELL, I KNOW THIS IS JUST ABOUT IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU TO HEAR, BUT JOHNNY BLAZE IS ONE OF *THEM.*
YOU NEED TO SAVE HIM TO SAVE *YOURSELF.*

THERE YOU GO. GET *FIRED* UP.
BUT I'M NOT YOUR PROBLEM.
THERE'S A *SICKNESS* INSIDE YOU.
IF YOU'RE GONNA BURN IT OUT, YOU GOTTA STOP *HATING* EACH OTHER.
YOU'VE GOTTA WORK *TOGETHER.*
OR IT'S THE *END* FOR BOTH OF YOU.

A SHADOW COUNTRY IS RISING.
AND YOUR TIME IN IT IS OVER, TALIA WARROAD.
SHAP
TRAITOR.
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO MONITOR AND CONTROL THE BALANCE OF LIGHT AND DARK.
IF YOU'RE ON THE SIDE OF DEVILS...
SKELCH
...THEN I OFFICIALLY TENDER MY RESIGNATION FROM THE COUNCIL OF NIGHT MAGICIANS!
AIIIEEE!
GET UP, GIRLIE.
HRRM.
COME ON. LET'S GO.
PAT PAT

YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE.
WHAT'S... WHAT'S HAPPENING?
I WAS WRONG BEFORE.
I THOUGHT WE WERE FIGHTING FOR DIFFERENT TEAMS.
BUT NOW IT'S CLEAR WE'RE ON THE SAME SIDE.
YOU SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO THE WILL OF THE COUNCIL, ZEBEDIAH.
GO. THIS IS ALREADY UGLY.
IT'S ABOUT TO GET UGLIER.
KRAK
FIND THE GHOST RIDER!
WE'RE GOING TO NEED HIM IN THE BATTLE AHEAD.

WHEN I LIVED IN HAYDEN'S FALLS, I WAS SURROUNDED BY WHAT I *WANTED* TO SEE.
BUT WHEN I'M FACE-TO-FACE WITH WOLVERINE, I'M CONFRONTED BY WHAT I *NEED* TO SEE.
FWOOSH
THE HARD TRUTH.
DO IT.
USE THE HELLFIRE CLAWS...
HARRR!
...TO EXORCISE THE DEMON WITHIN ME.
WE'RE OUR OWN WORST ENEMIES.

PAST FEW MONTHS ON THE ROAD, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO MAKE IT ON MY OWN.
BUT IT'S CLEAR NOW.
I NEED ***HELP.***
NOT JUST FROM WOLVERINE.
BUT FROM THE GHOST RIDER.
HE MIGHT THINK MY HEART IS WEAK, AND I MIGHT THINK HIS POWER IS MY CURSE.
BUT WE NEED TO LEAN ON EACH OTHER INSTEAD OF FIGHTING FOR CONTROL.
KRINSH
FWOOOSH

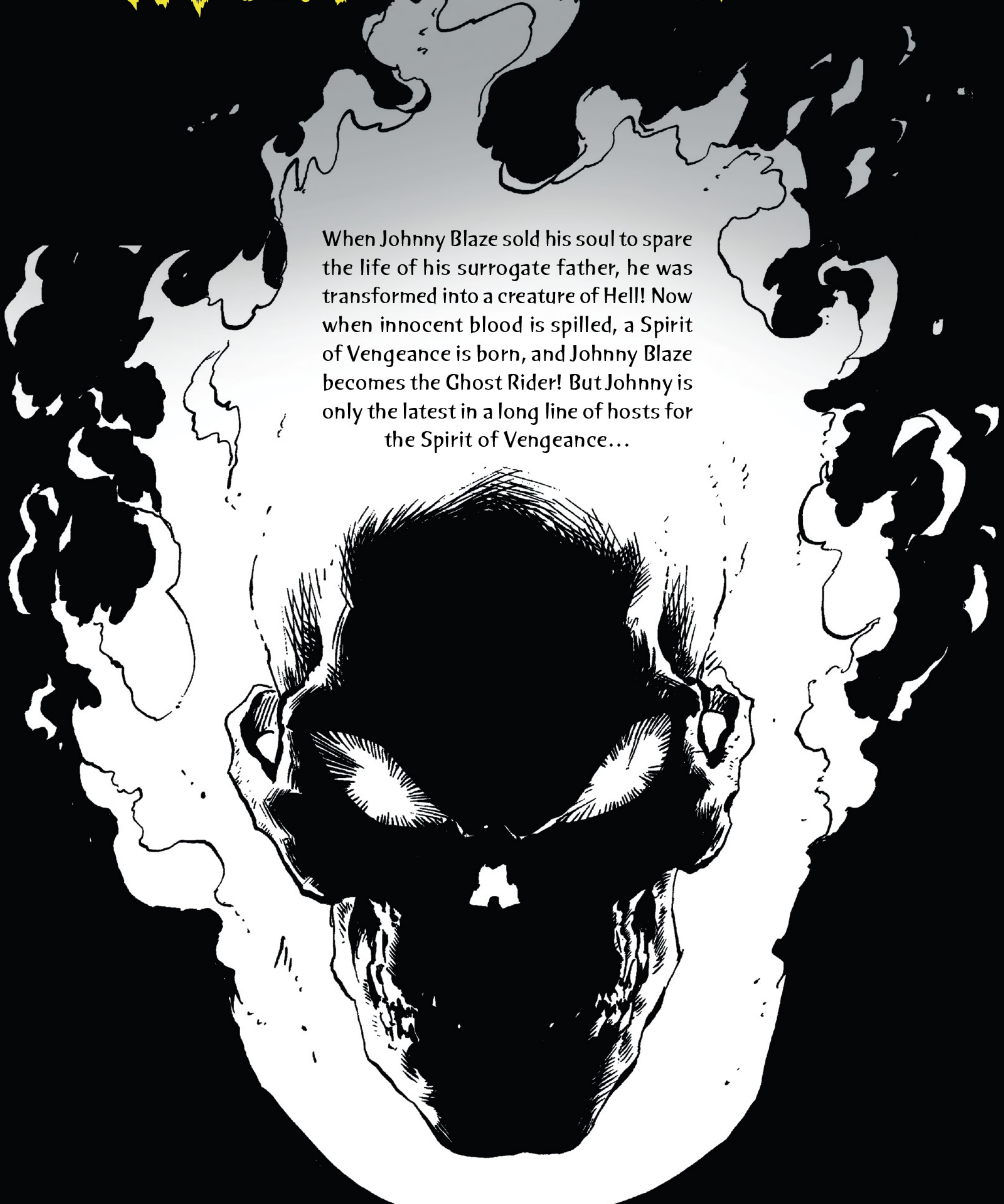
HNNNN...
MORE AND MORE I'M REALIZING--WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME ISN'T THE GHOST RIDER.
IT'S HOW DISCONNECTED WE'VE BECOME. LIKE TWO PEOPLE WARRING FOR THE SAME CANCEROUS BODY.
LET'S GO, JOHNNY.
GET UP, GHOST RIDER.
THE SCAR IS GONE.
MY BODY FEELS RAW AND HOLLOW AND SCRAPED OUT, BUT MY OWN.
BUT EVEN THOUGH I'M HEALING...
...I KNOW I WON'T BE ABLE TO REST...
SPLIK
...AS LONG AS THE WORLD REMAINS POISONED BY NIGHTMARES.
SKELCH

#6 Variant by BJÖRN BARENDS

GHOST RIDER: VENGEANCE FOREVER

GHOST RIDER

VENGEANCE FOREVER



When Johnny Blaze sold his soul to spare the life of his surrogate father, he was transformed into a creature of Hell! Now when innocent blood is spilled, a Spirit of Vengeance is born, and Johnny Blaze becomes the Ghost Rider! But Johnny is only the latest in a long line of hosts for the Spirit of Vengeance…

NEVER THOUGHT I'D LAST THIS LONG.
WHEN YOU'RE LIVING AT EIGHTY MPH, HOW CAN YOU FEEL ANY OTHER WAY?
A HIGH-OCTANE LIFE'S THE ONLY ONE WORTH LIVING.
I DON'T WEAR A HELMET FOR THE SAME REASON I DON'T HESITATE TO DRINK TOO MUCH OR FIGHT TOO MUCH OR #$%& TOO MUCH.
I *DARE* THE REAPER.
CRASH SIMPSON TAUGHT ME THAT. WE ONLY GET A LITTLE TIME ON THIS ROCK, SO OWN EVERY FULL-THROTTLE SECOND.
WHICH IS WHY I'VE FELT TROUBLED LATELY.
BECAUSE I *LOST* TIME.
YEARS, MONTHS--I'M NOT EVEN SURE.
NECRO TATTOO
SOMEBODY TOOK ME OFF THE ROAD, AND I'M LOOKING FOR SOME CLARITY--NOT ONLY ABOUT *HOW* THAT HAPPENED...
...BUT *WHO* I'M SUPPOSED TO EVEN BE ANYMORE.

THAT'S WHY I'VE COME TO NECRO, THE TATTOOIST.
WHEN PEOPLE SAY HE'S A MAGICIAN WITH INK, THEY'RE NOT JUST BEING METAPHORIC.
YOU'RE NOT EASY TO FIND.
THAT'S BECAUSE I'M NEVER IN THE SAME PLACE TWICE.
BUT THE ONES WHO NEED TO FIND ME ALWAYS DO.
HOW DOES THIS WORK?
TAKE OFF YOUR SHIRT, PLEASE.
YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT USED TO A BIKER WITHOUT ANY INK ON HIM.
OH, YOU'VE GOT PLENTY OF TATTOOS.
THEY JUST HAVEN'T RISEN TO THE SURFACE YET.
NOW PLEASE GET INTO THE CHAIR.
AND TRY TO RELAX.
HELL IS THIS?!
SNIK
SNIK
EVERYBODY TRIES TO GET AWAY...
...WHEN THE NEEDLE COMES OUT...WHEN THEIR STORY BEGINS TO REVEAL ITSELF.
BECAUSE THE TRUTH HURTS.

WHY...WHY DON'T *YOU* HAVE ANY TATTOOS?
OH, BUT I DO.
BUT THEY'RE ALL ON THE *INSIDE.*
YOU *SEE?*
YES. YES, I SEE.
YOU'RE NOT THE FIRST.
AND YOU WON'T BE THE LAST.
YOU CARRY THE *DEAD* INSIDE YOU.
CAN YOU FEEL THE HEAT OF THEM, JOHNNY?

"SKIN HAS STRATA, JUST LIKE TREES, JUST LIKE STONE.
"THE LAYERS TELL STORIES. THEY HOUSE EVIDENCE OF LEAN TIMES AND FAT TIMES. DROUGHTS, FIRES, DISEASE, OLD WOUNDS."
ANATOMY MEETS ARCHAEOLOGY MEETS MYTHOLOGY.
"YOU ARE *JOHNNY BLAZE,* BUT YOU'RE ALSO YOUR PARENTS, YOUR GRANDPARENTS, YOUR GREAT-GRANDPARENTS AND BEYOND.
"YOU ARE THE GHOST RIDER, BUT *THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE* HAS TAKEN MANY, MANY FORMS OVER AN UNGUESSABLE NUMBER OF YEARS."
WE HAVE TO GO DEEP IF YOU WANT TO KNOW...

"...THE LOST STORIES."
TEXAS. LATE 1800s.
CALL THIS THE DEVIL'S TREE.
BEEN HANGING FOLKS FROM IT A GOOD TEN YEARS.
BARK'S GONE A FAINT RED... MAYBE FROM ALL THE BLOOD THE ROOTS SOAKED UP.
SCORPIONS AND SNAKES GATHER IN THE SHADE.
SEEMS LIKE A FITTING PLACE FOR YOU TO DIE, JIMMY UNDERHILL.
I DIDN'T KNOW AUDREY WAS YOUR WIFE.
DON'T YOU SAY THAT WHORE'S NAME. ONLY I CAN SAY THAT WHORE'S NAME!
BE BURYING HER SOON ENOUGH. BUT YOU?
YOU, I'M LEAVING OUT FOR THE BUZZARDS.
SHERIFF

YOU'RE THE LAW. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DOING WHAT'S RIGHT. THIS AIN'T RIGHT.
PLEASE. I'LL DO ANYTHING. ANYTHING YOU WANT. JUST LET ME AND AUDREY LIVE.
JIMMY...
DID YOU SAY... "ANYTHING"?
?
I--YES? ANYTHING. ANYTHING!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING ON ABOUT?
SHOW ME.
SHOW MEPHISTO.
HSSSSSSS
DAMNATION!

BLAM
REE-HEEE
WH-WHOA!
THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?!
HURK!
HHHNNN!
GAAA!
CHK

GAK...
THE FRONTIER IS BUSY WITH SINNERS.
AIIIEEEE!!!
KRIKIK
I NEED A *TRUE LAWMAN* TO ROUND THEM ALL UP.
KRAK
RIDE FOR ME...
...PARTNER.

"YOU ALWAYS LIKED THE LAWLESS TERRITORIES BEST.
"THEY KEPT YOU BUSY AND HELL FAT WITH SINNERS."

ROXANNE
R.I.P. CRAIG
R.I.P.
I...I CAN SEE IT. I CAN SMELL IT AND FEEL IT AND HEAR IT.
THAT'S WHY YOU GET TATTOOS. TO *REMEMBER.*
The Crash Simpson Stunt Cycle Extravaganza
THAT'S MY JOB. TO FIND THE MEMORIES.
IT'S A LITTLE LIKE COAXING GHOSTS FROM THE WALLS OF A HAUNTED HOUSE.
EVERY SEER KNOWS THIS IS TRUE.
HANDS CAN SAY A LOT ABOUT A PERSON.
BLAZE
THEY WORK TOGETHER, LIKE *BROTHERS.*
KETCH
THE LEFT HAND IS NORMALLY WEAKER...
...BUT YOURS... MAKES JUST AS STRONG OF A FIST.
KETCH

IDAHO. THE TIME OF THE SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE.
HELLRAZOR HIDEAWAY
WHERE'D YOU END UP BURYING THAT COP?
IT'S LIKE A LIVESTOCK TRAILER BUT PACKED WITH PEOPLE. SEMI WILL DELIVER TO YOU.
ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS AND A BOTTLE OF TEQUILA ON THIS SHOT, BOYS.
HEY.
KRAKOOM
SPOOKY OUT THERE TONIGHT, RIGHT?

SPOOKY NIGHTS ARE THE BEST FOR TELLING *GHOST STORIES.*
YOU WANT TO HEAR A GHOST STORY?
OLD *DANNY KETCH* WILL TELL YOU A GHOST STORY.
OH, AND I'LL TAKE A WHISKEY. ANYTHING OVER A HUNDRED PROOF. DOUBLE. NEAT. THANKS.
IT'S NIGHTTIME. AND A MOTHER GOES INTO HER SON'S ROOM TO TUCK HIM IN.
SHE FINDS HIM PALE AND SHIVERING.
"WHAT'S WRONG?" SHE ASKS.
AND HE SAYS, *"I THINK THERE'S SOMETHING UNDER MY BED."*
"I'M SURE THAT'S NOT THE CASE," THE MOTHER SAYS.
BUT TO HUMOR THE CHILD, SHE GETS DOWN ON HER KNEES AND CHECKS UNDER THE BOX SPRING...

...AND THERE SHE SEES A FACE-- A PALE AND SHIVERING FACE!
IT'S HER SON?!
AND YOU KNOW WHAT HE SAYS?
HE SAYS, *"I THINK THERE'S SOMETHING **IN** MY BED."*
PRETTY GOOD, RIGHT?
GIVES ME THE CREEPING FLESH EVERY TIME.
THOK
KSSH
BUT YOU KNOW WHAT I LIKE MOST ABOUT IT?
THE DUPLICITY.
MORAL CONFUSION, MAN.

IS THIS ONE A PREDATOR?
AIEEE!
IS THAT ONE A VICTIM?
OR ARE THEY *BOTH* THE MONSTER?
SHIK SHIK
BLAM BLAM BLAM
MY BROTHER'S BIKE IS OUTSIDE.

I NEED YOU TO TELL ME WHERE JOHNNY IS.
MAYBE YOU DON'T KNOW THIS--BUT AS BAD AS HE MIGHT BE...
...I'M *WORSE.*
I'M THE MONSTER UNDER MY BROTHER'S BED.
PRIVA DO N ENTE
BOSS!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO BOTHER ME.
VATE NOT TER
BUT HE'S HERE, *BLACKOUT!* KETCH CAME!

HE'S ASKING ABOUT HIS BROTHER...
THWUMP THWUMP
"...HE'S ASKING ABOUT *BLAZE*."
THWUMP
WHAT DO WE DO, BLACKOUT?
DO WE RUN OR DO WE--?
KUNCH
KRINCH
DANNY?!
I'M GOING TO BURY YOU BOTH IN IRON COFFINS AND DROP THEM DOWN A MINE SHAFT.
SSSKLINK
DO YOU HEAR ME?!
I'M GOING TO--

KRAKOOM
GAAIIII!!!
DROOOM
SCREEEEEE
HELL DOESN'T OWN ALL THE PAIN...

...THE HEAVENS CAN BE JUST AS PUNISHING.
"I REMEMBER."

THE RATTLE OF CHAINS. THE TOP SCRAPING OFF THE COFFIN. THAT FIRST BIG BREATH OF COLD, FRESH AIR.
IT TASTED ALMOST AS GOOD AS THE WHISKEY DANNY AND I DRANK THAT NIGHT IN THE RUINED BAR.
A BROTHER CAN BE YOUR BEST FRIEND OR YOUR WORST ENEMY, *HMM?*
BUT EVEN WHEN YOU'RE AT YOUR WORST, THE CHAINS THAT BIND YOU CAN'T BE BROKEN.
MOST PEOPLE CLOSE THEIR EYES.
WHAT?
BEFORE THEY KISS. BEFORE THEY DIE. BEFORE I BRING THE NEEDLE TO THEIR SKIN. THEY CLOSE THEIR EYES.
BUT NOT YOU.
YOU KEEP YOUR EYES WIDE OPEN. WHY?
DON'T WANT TO MISS ANYTHING, I GUESS.
WHEN YOU'RE RIDING HARD, YOU LET YOUR GAZE DRIFT FOR JUST A SECOND AND YOU'RE DEAD.

PENNSYLVANIA. THE TIME OF THE MIDNIGHT SONS.
THE INK SOAKS INTO MY SKIN.
AND THE STORIES COME TO LIFE INSIDE ME.
IT'S LIKE THEY'RE PLAYING ACROSS THE SCREENS OF MY EYES...
...EVEN AS I'M RIPPED DOWN A MILLION MILES OF BLACKTOP...
...AND HUNDREDS OF YEARS OF HISTORY.
THIS TIME, IT'S A MEMORY OF DRACULA, MORBIUS, BLADE, AND THE *OTHER*.
HE FIGHTS MONSTERS.
HE FIGHTS WITH MONSTERS.
HE FIGHTS FOR A MONSTER.
HE *IS* A MONSTER.
THAT'S NOT SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE.
IT'S SOMETHING TO *ENDURE*.
THAT'S WHY IT'S CALLED A CURSE.

THERE ARE OVER TWO HUNDRED INNOCENT LIVES ON THIS BLOOD TRAIN.
MORBIUS AND BLADE COULD SMELL THEM FROM MILES AWAY.
BUT I COULD SMELL YOU, DRACULA.
I COULD SMELL YOUR SIN.
AND IT'S MADE ME SO VERY HUNGRY.
I'M HERE TO SWALLOW IT WHOLE.
VENGEANCE!!!

IOWA. THE TIME OF THE ALL-NEW GHOST RIDER.
I CAN ONLY HOPE I DO ENOUGH GOOD...
...TO MAKE UP FOR THE PAIN AND UGLINESS I REAP.
COMMON WISDOM SAYS YOU'RE ALWAYS SUPPOSED TO LOOK THREE PLACES AT THE SAME TIME.
THE ROAD BEHIND...
...THE ROAD BEFORE...
...THE ROAD AHEAD.
COMING FOR YOU, SCARECROW.

BUT THE REAL RIDERS CAN SEE FARTHER AND WIDER THAN THAT.
THE BURNT RUBBER SCARRED INTO THE ROAD FROM AN ACCIDENT FIVE YEARS AGO.
FMMM
THE CHILD CRYING ALONE IN THE BACKSEAT OF A CAR PARKED AT THE GROCERY STORE.
THE TRUCKER GOING THE WRONG WAY UP A RAMP TWO EXITS AWAY.
AND FARTHER-- AND FARTHER STILL.
WE CAN SEE IT ALL.

THERE'S *PAIN* AND *DANGER* EVERYWHERE.
KRRSH

NEW YORK. 2099.
THE ROADS ARE LIKE A WEB...
...AND THE RIDERS ARE LIKE THE SPIDERS...
I'M ZADKIEL, YOU'RE ZADKIEL...
...THAT SENSE THE TROUBLED VIBRATIONS SHIVERING THROUGH THE STRANDS THAT CONNECT US ALL.
AND NOW...NOW I'M STARTING TO SEE THE CONNECTIONS THROUGH THE EXPANSE OF TIME AS WELL.
YOU'RE ZADKIEL...
I'M ZADKIEL...

WE'RE ALL ZADKIEL...
WE'RE ALL ZADKIEL...
WE'RE ALL ZADKIEL...
WE'RE ALL ZADKIEL...
YOUR ANCESTORS MIGHT HAVE NAVIGATED THOSE ROADS BY HOOF AND SADDLE...
...AND YOUR DESCENDANTS MIGHT TRAVEL THEM BY MEANS YOU CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE.
WE'RE ALL ZADKIEL...
WE'RE ALL ZADKIEL...
WE'RE ALL ZADKIEL...
WE'RE ALL ZADKIEL...
WE'RE ALL ZADKIEL...
JOHNNY BLAZE ISN'T GOING TO BE AROUND FOREVER.

BUT AS LONG AS THERE IS LIFE LEFT IN THE WORLD...
...THERE WILL BE *EVIL*...
THROUGH CABLES AND SIGNALS AND SCREENS, WE'RE CONNECTED NOW.
ALL OF THE SAME MIND.
...TAKING DIFFERENT FORMS...
VREEE
...FINDING DIFFERENT WAYS TO CORRUPT...
...WHICH MEANS THERE WILL *ALWAYS* BE A SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE.

TIME WILL PUT ITS MARK ON *ME* MORE THAN I'LL EVER PUT A MARK ON *TIME*.
BUT RIGHT NOW, WHILE I'M HERE, I'M GOING TO DO MY DAMNEDEST TO HONOR THE ONES WHO CAME BEFORE ME.
TO PROTECT THE INNOCENT, TO KEEP ON FIGHTING THROUGH THE LONG DAYS AND THE LONGER NIGHTS.
THOSE WHO SURVIVE, CARRY THE DEAD WITH US.
WHICH MEANS MY LEGACY WILL ONE DAY BELONG TO SOMEBODY ELSE.
THERE ARE NO BEGINNINGS OR ENDS, SO EVEN IF PEOPLE WON'T REMEMBER MY NAME IN A THOUSAND YEARS...
...MY *SPIRIT* WILL ENDURE.
ASPHALT CRUMBLES. METAL RUSTS.
FLESH ROTS. INK FADES.
VROOM-DA-KROOOM

BUT VENGEANCE IS FOREVER.

NUMBER SEVEN

FBI
SPECIAL AGENT
JOHNATHAN BLAZE

“Shadow Hunters”

THE LUMBERJACK TAVERN.
NEAR HELL'S BACKBONE. UTAH.
WOLVERINE CARVED *SOMETHING* OUT OF ME.
I'M NOT SURE WHAT TO THINK OF IT...
A SPY.
AN INHIBITOR.
A PARASITE.

AS LONG AS IT WAS IN ME, SHORT-CIRCUITING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ME AND GHOST RIDER...
...I'D NEVER TRULY ESCAPED THE PRISON OF HAYDEN'S FALLS.

YOU WANT SOME MORE, HON?
YES, PLEASE.
SOMEWHERE IN COLORADO.
I'LL TAKE ALL THE DIESEL YOU GOT.
COFFEE HELPS.
COFFEE SO BLACK IT'S LIKE THE DIRT DUG FROM THE BOTTOM OF A GRAVE.
I FEEL LIKE I'M FINALLY WAKING UP.

BUT EVEN THOUGH I'VE BEEN EXORCISED OF THAT...THING...
...EVEN THOUGH I'M THINKING CLEARLY NOW, I STILL HAVEN'T UNTANGLED WHAT MY NEXT MOVE IS.
Star Chron
THIRTEENTH CHURCH FIRE DEEMED ARSO
Plague of Spiders Descends on Community
Glowing Sinkhole Appea in Middle of Highw
YOU'RE DRINKING FASTER THAN I CAN POUR.
ANOTHER WARM-UP?
I'M ON MY WAY OUT, BUT, YEAH, SURE.
ONE MORE SHOT OF OCTANE FOR THE ROAD.
SEE YOU LATER.
YOU CAN COUNT ON IT.

DISPATCH, ANYBODY CALL IN LAST NIGHT WITH A REPORT OF AN 11-71 AT THE LUMBERJACK?
LICE
THAT'S A NEGATIVE.
THIS PLACE HAS BEEN BURNING LONG AND HOT. IT'S A TOTAL LOSS.
SHOULD I SEND OUT AN ENGINE?
PLEASE ADVISE.
GAAA!
REPEATING. PLEASE ADVISE.
KOFF-- NO-- HAK

GAAK...
I AM JOHNNY...
SKELCH
...BUT I AM NOT JOHNNY.
I AM...
...EXHAUST.
AND YOU...YOU'RE A SHADOW OF A SHADOW.
KEEP SPREADING OUR DARKNESS.

MUST HAVE GUZZLED A GALLON OF COFFEE EARLIER, BUT I'VE NEVER FELT SO *TIRED*.
FOUND THE FIRST MOTEL I COULD AND THREW DOWN ENOUGH BILLS TO COVER A FEW NIGHTS.
The Red Eye
NO VACANCY
MAYBE MY BODY'S STILL RECOVERING.
MAYBE I SHOULDN'T BE IN SUCH A RUSH TO GET BACK ON THE ROAD.
BLACK CLOUDS OF EXHAUSTION DARKEN THE EDGES OF MY VISION.
RATTLE
CHIK
KREEEK

I DOSED UP YOUR COFFEE WITH A FUNGAL TINCTURE.
IT'S GOING TO MAKE YOU REAL QUIET FOR A WHILE.
IT'S ALSO GOING TO MAKE YOU *RECEPTIVE.*
CONSIDER THIS A COMBINATION OF AN INTERROGATION...
KIKLIK
...AND AN AUDITION.
LET'S SEE WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE YOU, JOHNNY BLAZE.

GIVE ME EVERY TRUTH.
GIVE ME ALL YOUR POISON.
"THE BEGINNING OF EVERY GHOST STORY IS A BROKEN ENDING.
"THINGS HAVEN'T TURNED OUT AS THEY SHOULD.
"PAIN LINGERS..."

...JUSTICE AND HEALING HAVEN'T BEEN ACHIEVED.
"ACTION IS REQUIRED.
"THE HAUNTING WON'T END UNTIL THE TROUBLE IS RECTIFIED, THE SOURCE OF THE SIN SCRUBBED CLEAN."

YOU'RE A DRIFTER NOW, JOHNNY...
...BUT YOU WERE ONCE A *KING*.
THE KING OF HELL.
HAIL! HAIL! HAIL!
AND EVERY KING IS *BELOVED*...
...AND EVERY KING IS *HATED*.
HAIL! HAIL! HAIL!

HAIL! HAIL! HAIL!
YOU WERE HATED INDEED...
...BY BLACKHEART...
...WHO THOUGHT THE CROWN WAS HIS TO CLAIM.
KRIKAK

WHAT MADE IT WORSE IS THAT YOU DIDN'T WANT IT.
NOT ANY OF IT.
"THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERED TO YOU WAS GONE.
"BLACKHEART HAD FOUGHT YOU SO MANY TIMES BEFORE, AND FAILED.
"BUT THE DEVIL IS A SEDUCER...
"SO HE WAITED UNTIL THE TIME WAS RIGHT...
"...WHEN THE GHOST RIDER WAS DORMANT, WHEN JOHNNY BLAZE WAS SLEEPING, WHEN DREAMS MAKE ANYTHING POSSIBLE...
"...AND HE GAVE *ROXANNE* BACK TO YOU AND YOU GAVE YOURSELF OVER TO HER...
"...AND IN THAT MOMENT OF VULNERABILITY..."
WILL YOU DO SOMETHING FOR ME, JOHNNY?
ANYTHING.

YOU'RE MY HUSBAND. YOU'RE THE ONE I LOVE.
YES.
I WANT YOU, NOT HIM. CAN I JUST HAVE YOU?
YES.
THEN GIVE HIM TO ME. SELL ME YOUR SPIRIT.
FOR WHAT?
FOR A KISS. A LONG, SWEET KISS.
OKAY.
IS THAT A YES?
YES.
THEN ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS LET GO.
AND I'LL BE ALL YOURS AND YOU'LL BE ALL MINE.

NO...
NOOOOOO!
IT'S DONE.
THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE HAS NO HOST.
JOHNNY BLAZE IS A **HUSK** OF A MAN.
AAAAAIEEE!

HNNN.
HOW LONG I BEEN OUT?
TWO DAYS.
YOU GONNA UNLOCK ME?
THINK THAT'S A QUESTION YOU GOT TO ASK YOURSELF.
BECAUSE YOU'VE ALLOWED YOURSELF TO BE CHAINED UP, TO VARYING DEGREES, FOR SOME TIME NOW.
I'VE BEEN IN THAT MESSED-UP HEAD OF YOURS LONG ENOUGH...
...I THINK IT'S IN PART BECAUSE YOU THINK YOU *DESERVE* IT.
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
MY NAME'S *SPECIAL AGENT TALIA WARROAD*...
...AND I'M LOOKING FOR A @#$%& PARTNER.
FBI

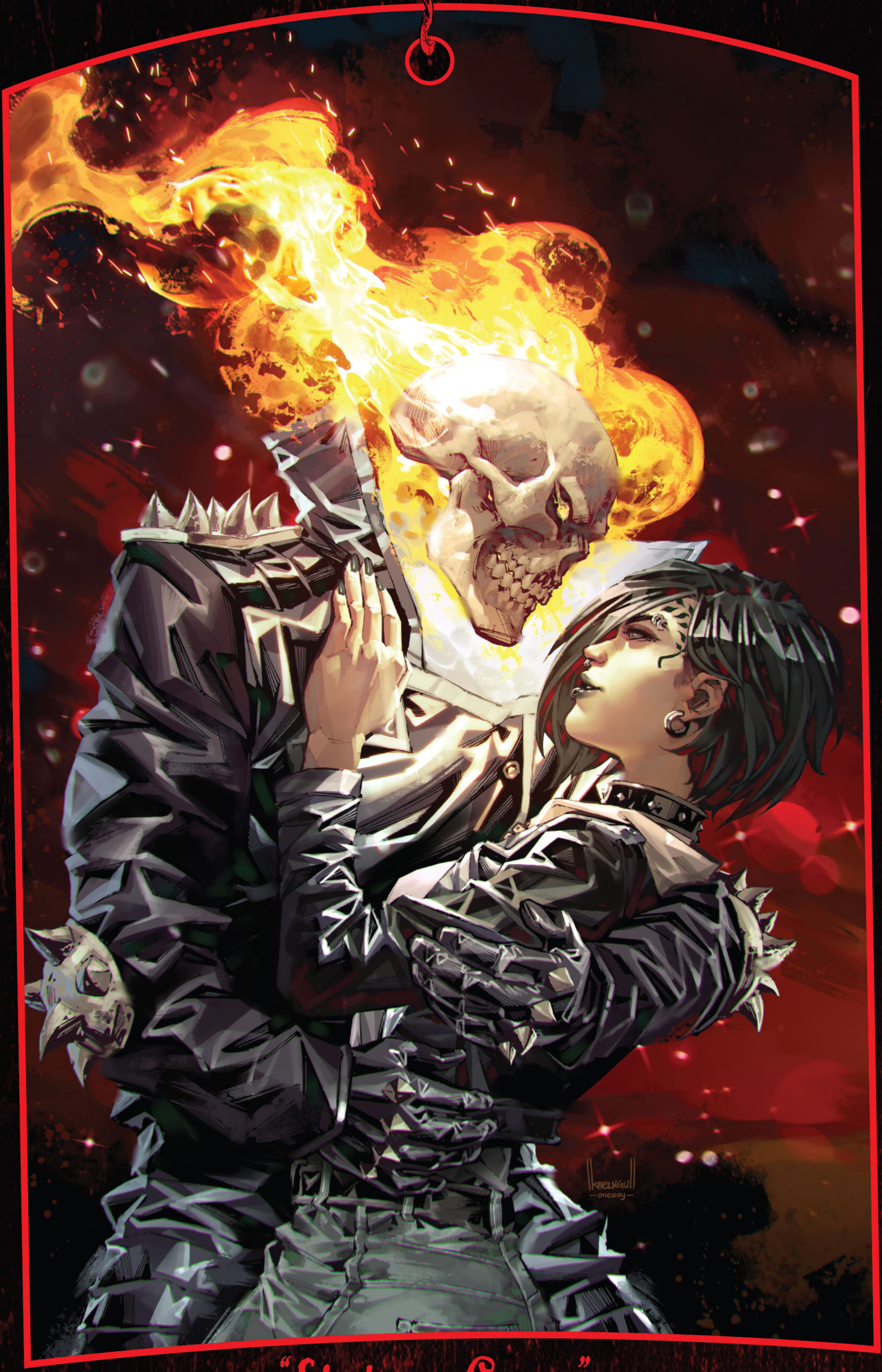
I CAN'T PROMISE YOU'LL BE SAFE WITH ME.
I CAN'T PROMISE YOU'LL BE SAFE WITH *ME* EITHER.
I DO THINGS, TALIA. *BAD* THINGS.
THINGS THAT ARE OUT OF MY CONTROL.
YOU DON'T HAVE A MONOPOLY ON DARKNESS, JOHNNY.
MY HEART IS BLACK AS MIDNIGHT, AND BLACK'S THE ONLY COLOR FIRE CAN'T BURN.
TRUTH IS... I SEE A LOT OF ME IN YOU.
NOW GO TAKE A SHOWER. YOU SMELL LIKE HELL.

AND WE GOT WORK TO DO.
12 UNEXPLAINED DEATHS
SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION IN PARK
Highway to Hell
DAY CAMP KILLER STILL AT LARGE
"An Angel Told Me To
Light Fire in Basement
CHURCH MURDER/SUICIDE REMAINS UNEXPLAINED
DEMONIC CULT CLAIMS 36 LIVES
Cannibal Convoy Rips Thru Midwest
MYSTERIOUS 14 CAR
NO BODIES
SYMBOL APPEARS CARVED IN FLESH

HELL'S BACKBONE. UTAH.
I CALLED ALL OF YOU HERE. AND YOU ANSWERED.
IF YOU CROSSED THE FINISH LINE, YOU WERE PROMISED A CHANCE TO HOLD CONGRESS WITH THE DEVIL.*
POLICE
*SEE ISSUE #5! --DS
AND NOW THE RACE CONTINUES. I MIGHT NOT RULE HELL.
BUT I COMMAND THE ASH AND SMOKE ITS FIRES CAST UPON THE WORLD.
AND THOUGH I CAN NO LONGER CLAIM THE GHOST RIDER...
...I OWN HIS *SHADOW.*

LET'S BEGIN OUR WORK IN EARNEST.
LET'S BRING TO THIS COUNTRY A NIGHT AS BLACK AS THE ASPHALT OF A MIDNIGHT HIGHWAY!
N SKULLS

NUMBER EIGHT



"Skeleton Crew"

SOMEWHERE IN COLORADO.
TALIA...
...I THINK YOU'RE LOOKING AT IT WRONG.
DEMONIC CULT CLAIMS 36 LIVES
SUN HASN'T BEEN S IN OVER A MO
Basement Filled With S
Convoy Midwest
Main St Cover
BEEN STUDYING THIS CASE FOR MONTHS, JOHNNY.
AND I HAVEN'T BEEN WRONG SO FAR.
LOAN ME THAT KNIFE FOR A SEC.
JUST LET ME TRY SOMETHING.
SKRCH

SUN HASN'T BEEN SE
IN OVER A MONTH
N COMMUN
PR AFTER ECLI
THERE.
DEATHS
TOWN VA
SYMBOL APPEARS CARVED IN FLESH
DO YOU SEE?
The Day The Dogs Turned On Their Owners
"An Angel Told Me To ght Fire in Basement"
Portal Ope Parkin
PONTANEOUS HUM N COMBUSTION IN PA
y to H
IT'S A ROAD MAP...
...TO AN AMERICAN NIGHTMARE.
BOILING BLOOD RUNS FROM FAUCETS
GIANT
OG UP!
NIC CU
36 LIVE
PIZZA
THE SUPERNATURAL ACTIVITY IS MORE PRONOUNCED ALONG THE LINES, LIKE TRAFFIC ON A FREEWAY.
AND THE ANGLED JUNCTURES ARE THE HOTTEST LOCATIONS OF ALL.
THEN THAT'S WHERE WE GO.
ONE OF THE PLACES WHERE IT BURNS HOTTEST.
CHICAGO.
UN TO CROSS.

KAAAK
PEK PEK
THE UNKNOWN CEMETERY.
SLLLK
SLLLP
SLLLK
SSSLLLP
KAAK

ALABASTER IS DEAD.
WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS?
KAAK KAAAAK
ZEB?
ZEB, ARE YOU ALIVE?
WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
WHAT HAS BECOME OF THE COUNCIL OF NIGHT MAGICIANS?
SHORT VERSION IS, ALABASTER TRIED TO KILL ME.
AND I DIDN'T TAKE KINDLY TO IT.

SOMEWHERE IN ILLINOIS.
THE F.B.I. KNOW YOU'RE WORKING WITH ME, TALIA?
LESS THEY KNOW, THE BETTER.
SO... THEY JUST LET YOU DO YOUR OWN THING?
THE DAY I HEAR OTHERWISE, I HAND IN MY BADGE.
NICK FURY OWED ME SOME FAVORS WHEN S.H.I.E.L.D. SHUTTERED. SO I'LL WORK THIS UNIT FOR AS LONG AS THEY LET ME.
BUT WHATEVER. I'D BE DOING THIS #$%@ FOR FREE. SAME AS YOU.
I NEED TO GET A BIKE.
WHAT? JOHNNY BLAZE DOESN'T LIKE BEING CHAUFFEURED?
NO. HE DOESN'T.
THIS THING IS A TANK. I'VE BEEN--
LOOK OUT!

SCREEEEE
STUPID THING. WONDER WHAT IT WAS THINKING.
IT *WASN'T* THINKING.
IT WAS DOING WHAT IT WAS *TOLD.*
GET READY!
#$%@!
KRRREEE

HOLD ON!
THERE'S A SUDDEN CHILL TO THE AIR, AS IF SOMEBODY OPENED THE MOUTH OF A CRYPT.
AND JUST LIKE THAT, THE NIGHT COMES *ALIVE.*
SLAK
THUD
SLAK
SOMEBODY--OR *SOMETHING*--DOESN'T LIKE THAT TALIA AND I ARE WORKING TOGETHER.
A GOOD SIGN, I SUPPOSE...
KRINCH
...THAT WE'RE HEADED DOWN THE RIGHT ROAD.

DRIVING BLIND HERE, BLAZE!
WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T STOP!
THIS WOULD BE A REALLY, REALLY GOOD TIME FOR THE FLAMING-SKULL GUY TO SHOW UP!
KRNCH
DOESN'T WORK LIKE THAT.
AN INNOCENT LIFE NEEDS TO BE THREATENED.
APPARENTLY, YOU DON'T QUALIFY.
I'D BE OFFENDED IF I DID.
THERE. YOU'RE ALL CLEAR.
NOT REALLY.

GAAAAA!
THAK
CHIK
THUD
SPLAP
GIVE ME YOUR HAND!
WHAT ARE YOU--?
JUST GIVE ME YOUR #$%& HAND!
LET ME TRY SOMETHING.

HOW THE HELL ARE YOU DOING THAT?!
FWOOSH
I HAVE A WAY OF BRINGING OUT THE *WORST* IN PEOPLE.
NOW GET US THE @#$% OUT OF HERE.
FWOOOOOM

THESE OPEN HIGHWAYS ARE STARTING TO MAKE ME FEEL EXPOSED.
IT'LL BE GOOD TO GET OUT OF THE COUNTRY FOR A WHILE.

KRAK
SNAP
KRAK KAK
YOU CAN'T ESCAPE ME, BLAZE...
...BECAUSE YOU ARE ME.
"THIS CONSPIRACY GOES DEEP, WURM."

DEEPER THAN DIRT.
YOU WORK TOGETHER FOR A CENTURY, YOU THINK YOU KNOW A PERSON.
BUT THE HEAD OF THE COUNCIL OF NIGHT MAGICIANS WAS *CORRUPTED.*
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO KEEP THE BALANCE. MAINTAIN THE EVEN WEIGHT OF LIGHT AND DARK.
BUT THE DARK'S BEEN HEAVY LATELY, IN PART BECAUSE ALABASTER HAD HIS FOOT ON THE SCALE.
AN F.B.I. AGENT WAS WRAPPED UP IN IT TOO.
OUR INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN COMPROMISED.
THERE'RE SHADOWS EVERYWHERE.
WE GOTTA DIG UNTIL WE FIND THE ROOT OF IT.

WHAT'S THIS, THEN?
YOU GOT HER?
I'VE GOT YOU...
...VOLKA.
KLIK
WHEN I DISCOVERED WHAT ALABASTER WAS DOING... HE CHAINED ME UP...
WELL, FRIENDS AND BRETHREN, I THINK I KNOW WHY ALABASTER TURNED ON US.
THE *DEVIL* MADE HIM DO IT.

CHICAGO.
AIIIIEEE!
HEY!
YOU'VE GOT TO PAY THE...
...TOLL.
STOP.
TALIA!
THAT'S ENOUGH!

WHAT'S WRONG?
MY HEAD.
BLAZE?
DIZZY...
HURRR.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE BETTER?
SINCE THAT PARASITE GOT CARVED OUT OF YOU?
I AM.
OR AT LEAST I'M ON MY WAY.

MY BRAIN STILL FEELS A LITTLE LIKE AN ANTENNA THAT HASN'T FOUND THE RIGHT FREQUENCY.
WHENEVER THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE FLARES INSIDE ME...
...I'M IN TWO WORLDS AT ONCE.
I'M SEEING THINGS.
I'M...
HEY. HEY, BLAZE!
SNAP SNAP
SMAK
YOU GOOD?
YEAH...I'M GOOD. BUT CHICAGO...

"...THIS PLACE IS SICK."
ON THE ONE HAND, IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE HOW THIS CITY CAN GO ON--
--DRINKING ITS COFFEE AND MOWING ITS LAWNS AND PUNCHING ITS TIME CARDS, WHILE ALL THIS UGLINESS IS HAPPENING.
ON THE OTHER HAND... THAT'S HOW AMERICA WORKS.
WHAT YOU DID BEFORE... WHEN YOU SUMMONED THE RIDER...
...CAN YOU DO THAT AGAIN?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE AFRAID OF HIM.
HE'S THE WORST THING ABOUT ME.
BUT IF WE'RE CAREFUL...HE CAN *SENSE* THINGS. HE CAN POINT US TOWARD THE *SOURCE* OF THE EVIL. LIKE A COMPASS.
I'M GOING TO HAVE TO TOUCH YOU.
THEN TOUCH ME.
BUT BE CAREFUL.
CAREFUL ISN'T REALLY THE WAY I ROLL.

HMM.
TASTES LIKE ASH.
ANYTHING?
I THINK... MAYBE YOU SHOULD...
WHERE SHOULD WE GO?
BLAZE?
RUN.
WHAT?
RUN!

NUMBER NINE

"Slaughterhouse"

CHICAGO.
NO!
LEAVE ME THE @#$% ALONE!
HHHNN!
JOHNNY!

HE DOESN'T BELONG TO YOU.
PUT ME DOWN!
HE BELONGS TO **ME.**
I SAID, PUT ME DOWN!
I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT, YOU @#$%.
YOU WANT TO EAT. AND YOU EAT **SIN.**
WELL, IF YOU LET ME WORK WITH JOHNNY--YOU KNOW WHAT I CAN PROMISE YOU?
A BIG, MEATY ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT BUFFET OF SIN.
AND REVENGE.

BECAUSE THE TROUBLE WE'RE CHASING-- *UFF!*--
--IS THE TROUBLE THAT TOOK YOU OFF THE ROAD.
YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF ME. *NNFF!* I'LL LET YOU TAKE THE HANDLEBARS WHEN IT'S TIME.
YOU HEARING ME...
...*JOHNNY?*
UNNNNG...
WELL... YOU JUST GOING TO LIE THERE?
YOU GOT SOME STONES ON YOU, TALIA.
THE RIDER COULD HAVE KILLED YOU.
HE DIDN'T. SO LET'S GET TO WORK.

THE ROADS IN THIS COUNTRY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HAUNTED.
EVERYDAY PEOPLE RAGE ON THEM... SCREAMING OBSCENITIES AT THE PERSON WHO GOES TOO SLOW, MUTTERING CONTEMPT FOR THE PERSON WHO GOES TOO FAST.
EVERYDAY PEOPLE DIE ON THEM...
...THEIR SKIN SHREDDED IN EXPLOSIONS OF GLASS...
...THEIR HAIR BURNED IN TRAPS OF TWISTED METAL...
...THEIR BODIES HURLED A HUNDRED FEET.
ALL THAT PAIN LINGERS IN THE BLACKTOP--PINNED TO A MILE MARKER OR A MAKESHIFT CROSS...

...AND THEIR SPIRITS ARE DOOMED TO WATCH THE REST OF US FIND THE EXIT RAMPS THEY NEVER REACHED.
THE INTERSTATE SYSTEM IS EQUIVALENT TO THE HALLWAYS OF THE VAST HAUNTED HOUSE THAT IS OUR COUNTRY.
THERE IS POWER IN THESE DARK CONDUITS...
...A POWER THAT NIGHTMARE FORCES HAVE PLUGGED INTO.
I THINK I EXPERIENCED A POINT OF CONFLUENCE IN HELL'S BACKBONE.
AND WE THINK WE'VE FOUND ANOTHER HERE IN CHICAGO.
A NEXUS.

DON'T DO THAT AGAIN, TALIA. DON'T SUMMON THE GHOST RIDER LIKE HE'S SOME KIND OF MATCH YOU CAN SPARK.
I CAN'T CONTROL THAT PART OF ME.
THEN YOU NEED TO **LEARN** TO.
I'M TRYING TO PROTECT YOU.
YOU DON'T NEED TO PROTECT ME. I'M NOT AFRAID.
MAYBE THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND ME.
I DON'T HAVE ANY GUILT OR SHAME OR DENIAL.
I DON'T TRY TO HIDE THE DARKNESS INSIDE ME, AND THERE'S PLENTY OF IT. ENOUGH TO FILL LAKE MICHIGAN.
I'VE DONE...THE UNSPEAKABLE.
I'VE BEEN INSIDE YOUR BRAIN. I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE.
SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO DO BAD THINGS TO MAKE THINGS GOOD.
HUH...
WHAT?
WHAT IS IT?

IT'S HARD TO DESCRIBE...BUT THE SPIRIT CAN SENSE *EVIL*. KIND OF LIKE A COMPASS POINTING ME TOWARD IT.
WHEN YOU IGNITED HIM... HE BROUGHT US *HERE*.
A CHURCH IS ALWAYS A PRETTY GOOD BAROMETER OF WHAT'S GOING ON LOCALLY.
THE DESPERATE PRAYERS, THE DIRTY CONFESSIONS.
FIRE AND BRIMSTONE. LOCUSTS AND BLOOD.
THE RIDER HAS BEEN TAKING ME ACROSS THE MAP.
YOU KNOW WHAT EVERY PLACE HAS HAD IN COMMON?

SACRIFICE.

KAAK KAAK KAAK
ZEB...
WHAT ABOUT HIM?
HE'S STILL OUT THERE...
WE'RE NOT ALONE IN THIS FIGHT.
THAT'S RIGHT, GIRLIE.
I AIN'T DEAD YET.
HOW MUCH LONGER THAT'S TRUE FOR... IS ANYBODY'S GUESS.
HELL'S BACKBONE.
UTAH.

YOU DON'T NEED TO DESTROY AN ENTIRE ROAD TO SHUT DOWN TRAFFIC.
YOU DON'T NEED TO RIP UP EVERY INCH OF A BODY TO MAKE IT DEAD.
BLACKHEART HAS BEEN SLOWLY BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE.
MIGHT AS WELL BE DIGGING SEWERS OR LAYING DOWN FIBER-OPTIC CABLES.
THAT'S HOW YOU CLAIM A COUNTRY.
THEY'RE SPILLING BLOOD AND POOLING SHADOWS...
...AND LEFT UNCHECKED, WE'LL ALL BE LIVING UNDER ITS SHAWL.
IF WE HIT THESE @#$% AT THE EQUIVALENT OF THEIR PORTS AND POWER PLANTS, WE BRING THE WHOLE DAMN NETWORK DOWN.

OKAY...SO, I SPENT A LOT OF TIME IN YOUR HEAD. LET ME INVITE YOU INTO MINE.
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?
SINCE GHOST RIDER GOT TAKEN OFF THE ROAD, THERE'S BEEN A NATIONWIDE RISE IN SUPERNATURAL EVENTS, BUT THEY'RE CLUSTERED AROUND FIVE POINTS.
NEW YORK. DC. SAVANNAH. HELL'S BACKBONE IN UTAH.
AND HERE, CHICAGO.
DC WAS DESIGNED AROUND MASONIC SYMBOLS, AND SAVANNAH IS A NECROPOLIS AND THE MOST HAUNTED CITY IN THE COUNTRY.
BUT WE CAN DEAL WITH THEM ANOTHER TIME.
MISSING PERSONS CASES SPIKE IN METRO
WHAT MATTERS RIGHT NOW IS CHICAGO, WHICH USED TO BE THE LIVESTOCK CAPITAL OF THIS COUNTRY.
ALL THE ROADS AND TRAIN TRACKS THAT LED OUT OF HERE--THEY'RE LIKE OLD ARTERIES THAT CONNECT THE COUNTRY, AND THIS CITY WAS THE SICK, BLEEDING HEART IN THE MIDDLE OF IT.
THAT STAIN--THE STAIN OF SLAUGHTER--IS STILL HERE.
6

PAY.
CAREFUL.
HEY. HEY, BUDDY. YOU NEED SOME HELP?
YOU HAVE TO PAY.
IF YOU WANT PASSAGE...
@#$%.
...YOU HAVE TO PAY.
KLIK KLIK TIK TIK TIK
I ALMOST HAVE ENOUGH!

STOP! WE DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU!
WHAT'S DOWN HERE?
RUMMM-KA-KUM
WHO ARE YOU TRYING TO PAY?
I'LL TAKE TEETH! I'LL TAKE BLOOD!
KA-KUM KA-KUM KA-SCREEEEE
GET OVER HERE! COME ON! NOW!
WE ALL HAVE TO PAY!
SCREEEEEEE

AAAAAAIIIIIIEEEEEEEEEE!
HRRRN.
JOHNNY?
THEY'RE BEING DRIVEN... HRRR...
...TO SLAUGHTER.

WHAT DID I TELL YOU, RIDER?
GO.
GO SAVE YOUR INNOCENTS.
GO FEAST ON SIN.

SNK
CHKKKKKK
FWOOOOSH

I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU HAVE ALL THE FUN WITHOUT ME.
FWISH
FWISH
WHICH WAY DID YOU GO?
RIDER?
JOHNNY?
YES.
AND NO.

EARLIER, WHEN TALIA STARTED DOWN THE STAIRS TO THE STATION...
...FOR A SECOND, I COULDN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WOMAN AND HER SHADOW.
MAYBE WE'RE ALL LIKE THAT SOMETIMES.
WHEN WE DRINK TOO MUCH OR RAGE TOO MUCH OR SNORT TOO MANY LINES OR DON'T GET ENOUGH SLEEP.
RUMM
SCREEEEEEE

THE DARKNESS TAKES US OVER.
MAYBE CITIES ARE LIKE THAT TOO.
ONE MINUTE, YOU'RE DAZZLED BY A FIVE-STAR RESTAURANT OR A VIEW FROM A SKYSCRAPER OR A PIECE OF ART HANGING IN A MUSEUM.
AND THE NEXT MINUTE, YOU'RE IGNORING THE GUY ON THE SIDEWALK WHO MIGHT BE SLEEPING OR MIGHT BE DEAD.
RUM RUM RUM
REEEEEEE

WE'D RATHER NOT RECOGNIZE OR WRESTLE WITH THE SHADOWS INSIDE US, THE SHADOWS THAT ARE THE BEDROCK OF THIS COUNTRY.
BUT IF WE PRETEND THEY'RE NOT THERE, THEY'LL EVENTUALLY POISON US.

LEONARDO ROMERO 2022

#6 Communidades Variant by LEONARDO ROMERO

NUMBER TEN

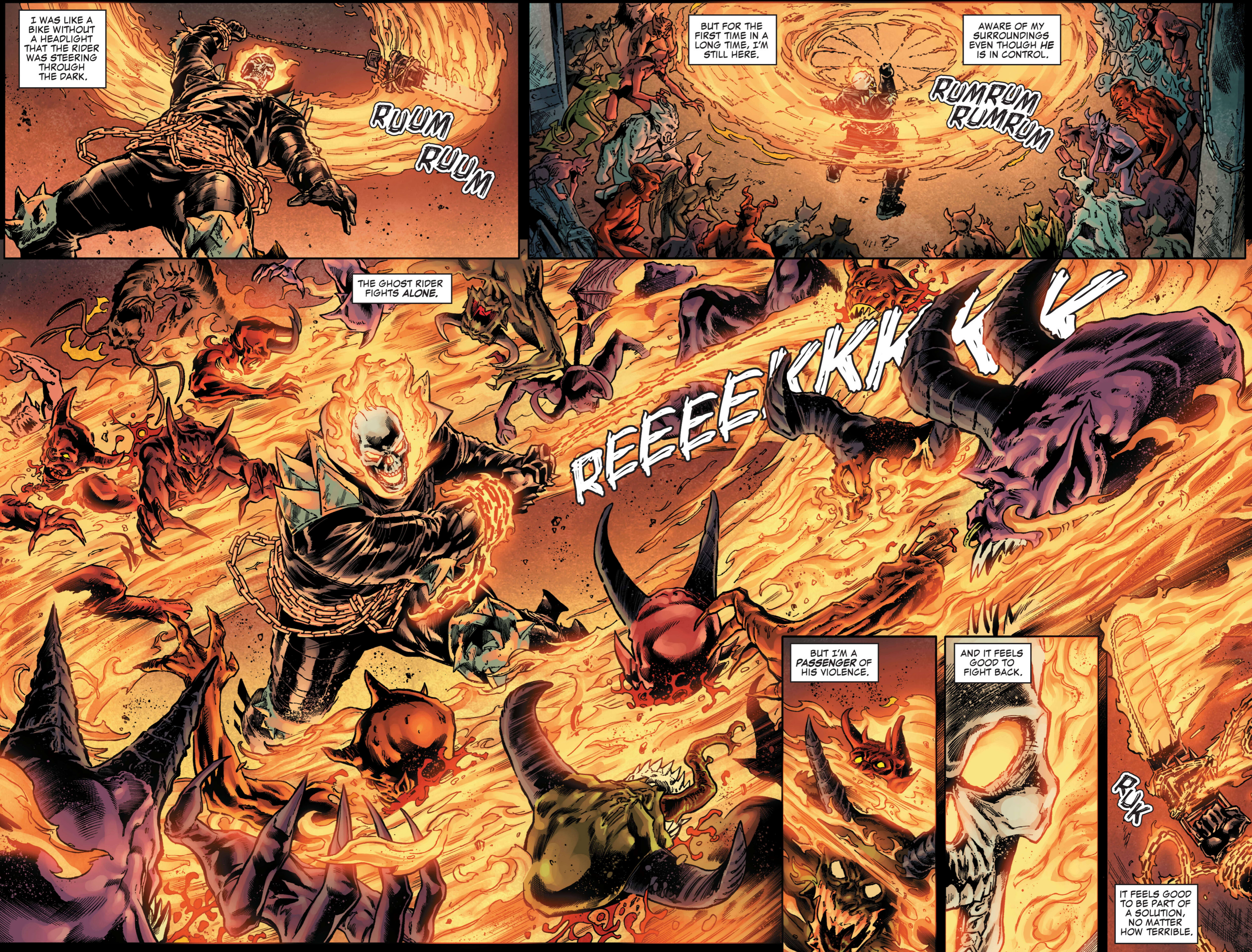
“American Nightmare”

CHICAGO.
SCRITCH
SCRATCH
SCRITCH
SCREEE
"GO.
SCREEEEEEEEEEE
"RUN.
"AS FAR AND AS FAST AS YOU CAN..."

...OR THERE WILL BE HELL TO PAY.
RUM RUM RUM

THERE'S ONLY ONE OF HIM.
WE GOT THE NUMBERS.
REEEEEE
BUT I'VE GOT THE *CHAIN SAW*.
SWARM HIM! **NOW!**

FOR A LONG TIME, WHEN THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE OCCUPIED ME, MY BRAIN WOULD GO BLACK.
RUKKKKKK
RUKKKKK
I WOULD WAKE UP IN AN ALLEY OR THE WOODS WITH MY CLOTHES SCORCHED OFF AND THE TASTE OF ASHES IN MY MOUTH...
...AND NO MEMORY OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED.
REE KKKKKK
I WASN'T TO BE TRUSTED.
BECAUSE I WAS THE REASON WE HAD BEEN IMPRISONED.
I WAS THE REASON *SHADOWS* HAD SPREAD UNCHECKED ACROSS THE COUNTRY.
RUK


I WAS LIKE A BIKE WITHOUT A HEADLIGHT THAT THE RIDER WAS STEERING THROUGH THE DARK.
RUUM RUUM
BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME, I'M STILL HERE.
AWARE OF MY SURROUNDINGS EVEN THOUGH *HE* IS IN CONTROL.
RUMRUM RUMRUM
THE GHOST RIDER FIGHTS **ALONE**.
REEEEEKKKKK
BUT I'M A ***PASSENGER*** OF HIS VIOLENCE.
AND IT FEELS GOOD TO FIGHT BACK.
RUK
IT FEELS GOOD TO BE PART OF A SOLUTION, NO MATTER HOW TERRIBLE.

THE GHOST RIDER MIGHT BE BACK.
BUT IT'S TOO LATE.
BECAUSE WE ARE EVERYWHERE, AND THIS NATION IS OURS TO CLAIM.
"A SENATOR VISITS HER DENTIST FOR A FILLING.
"SHE TELLS HER SECURITY DETAIL TO WAIT IN THE LOBBY.
"SHE'LL BE FINE, SHE SAYS.
VSSLRP
"IT'S JUST A ROUTINE PROCEDURE.
"SHE'LL BE DONE IN TIME TO GET BACK TO THE CAPITOL FOR THIS AFTERNOON'S VOTE.
AK AK...!

"THE *CARDINAL* OF NEW YORK HAD BEEN PRAYING LONG AND HARD INTO THE NIGHT...
"...TRYING TO READY HIS MIND AND SPIRIT FOR TOMORROW'S MEETING WITH THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.
"SEVERAL CRITICAL THREATS TO THE CHURCH WERE TO BE DEBATED.
"HIS EMINENCE DID NOT WANT TO BE INFLUENCED BY ANYTHING BUT GOD'S WILL.
"HE TOLD EVERYONE ELSE TO GO HOME.
"HE WOULD LOCK UP.
"THERE WAS NOTHING MORE PEACEFUL AND REASSURING TO HIM THAN AN EMPTY CHURCH LATE AT NIGHT.

"THE CFO OF A WEALTH MANAGEMENT COMPANY HAD BEEN STRUGGLING WITH HIS NERVES ALL WEEK.
"A SILENT MERGER WAS ON THE TABLE.
"A SHADOW BANK WANTED TO BUY INTO THE COMPANY.
"IN LIGHT OF THEIR RECENT LOSSES, THIS MOVE WOULD BE HIGHLY ILLEGAL BUT STRATEGICALLY SOUND, BOLSTERING THEIR QUARTERLY REPORT.
"HE HAD TO MAKE A DECISION, BUT EVERY POSSIBILITY SEEMED WRONG.
"HIS MOOD FELT BLACK, LIKE THE SPACE BETWEEN STARS.
AIIIIIE!
"LIKE THE PLACE WHERE THE WATER VANISHES ALL COLOR DOWN THE DRAIN.
"BUT WITH SOME ASSISTANCE, HE FOUND THE RIGHT PATH."

SLOWLY, SLOWLY, MY SHADOWS ARE SLIPPING THEIR WAY INTO BOARDROOMS AND COURTROOMS, PENTHOUSE SUITES AND GATED COMMUNITIES.
WE ARE RISING TO THE TOP OF THE COUNTRY.
BUT TO GET THERE, WE NEEDED THE SUPPORT OF THE BOTTOM.
IT HAS BEEN A PATIENT REVOLUTION.
"MY SERVANTS HAVE BEEN HARD AT WORK, MAKING BLOOD SACRIFICES IN MY HONOR, RECRUITING SOLDIERS IN THE WAR UNDERWAY.
"HIGHWAY BY HIGHWAY, WE FILLED THE TANKS OF SEMITRUCKS WITH POISON.
"ACRE BY ACRE, WE DRANK THE BITTER SWEAT OF FARMERS AND RANCHERS.
"TOWN BY TOWN, WE STAMPED WITH BLOOD THE TIME CARDS OF FACTORY WORKERS."

WHY SHOULD HELL WAIT FOR SINNERS TO COME TO US, WHEN WE COULD GO TO THE SINNERS AND CLAIM THEIR SERVICE?
WHY SHOULD I SETTLE FOR BEING THE PRINCE BELOW WHEN I COULD RULE ABOVE?
THIS COUNTRY WAS ALREADY A PLACE OF NIGHTMARES.
NOBODY EVEN NOTICED WE SHOWED UP.
UNTIL NOW.
YOU'RE ONE OF ALABASTER'S MAGICIANS... ZEBEDIAH.
I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'RE HERE TO JOIN ME?
THE COUNCIL'S UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP, BLACKHEART.
NO. I DON'T SUPPOSE.
SNARRR

YOU MIGHT AS WELL BE FIGHTING OCEANS OR MOUNTAINS.
I'M AN UNSTOPPABLE PART OF THIS WORLD NOW...
...AN ELEMENTAL FORCE.
YIPE!
HOLD UP THERE, PORCUPINE.
YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE...
...EXCEPT STRAIGHT BACK TO HELL.

THIS SHOULD BE THE END...

...BUT SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT.
REEEKK
MAYBE BECAUSE WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CHICAGO IS PART OF A LARGER DESIGN...
CHAK
...AND EVERY TIME I PUNCH OR BURN OR LASH OR CARVE UP ONE THREAT, ANOTHER PRESENTS ITSELF.
YOU CAN'T SIMPLY BLAST A HELLFIRE SHOTGUN AND TAKE DOWN WHAT'S DEEPLY EMBEDDED... STRUCTURAL... SYSTEMIC.
BUT IT'S *MORE* THAN THAT.
FWOOOSH

THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE IN THE AIR THAT FEELS UNRESOLVED.
GHOST RIDER!
AND IT HAS TO DO WITH *ME.*
A BROKEN VERSION OF ME ANYWAY.
I KNOW WHO HE IS, JUST AS HE KNOWS WHO I AM.
BECAUSE WE'VE BEEN LIVING WITH EACH OTHER SINCE HAYDEN'S FALLS.
HE'S MY WASTE... MY SHADOW... MY ***EXHAUST.***
JOHNNY...

TALIA WARROAD HUNTED ME DOWN, AS PART OF AN F.B.I. UNIT, BECAUSE SHE THOUGHT I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RISE IN SUPERNATURAL ACTIVITY.
JOOOOOHNNNNNYYYY...
SHE WASN'T WRONG.
SINCE THEN, WE'VE BECOME...I DON'T EVEN KNOW THE WORD FOR IT.
MORE THAN COLLEAGUES. MAYBE MORE THAN FRIENDS TOO.
...HELP...
BUT NOW SHE'S BEEN COMPROMISED.
LIKE THOSE POSSESSED ANIMALS WE ENCOUNTERED ON THAT DARK HIGHWAY.
AND IT'S UP TO ME TO RESCUE HER FROM HERSELF.
I ASK THE RIDER TO LET ME TAKE CARE OF THIS.
NO.

I BEG HIM.
NO!
AND THEN I COMMAND HIM.
IT WON'T BE... LIKE LAST TIME.
I WON'T FAIL US.
I'M STRONGER NOW.
JOHNNYYYyyyy...
I KNOW WHO I AM.
AND I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, TALIA.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAVED ME.
HASSSSSSS...

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO REMINDED ME IT WAS OKAY TO ASK FOR HELP.
YOU'RE NOT IN THIS ALONE EITHER.
COME BACK TO ME, TALIA.
NO! COME BACK TO ME, JOHNNY!
WE CAN DO THIS. TOGETH--
AAAAAH!
THDD
WUFF!
TALIA...
SPECIAL AGENT TALIA WARROAD.

PLEASE.
YOU'RE MY DAMN PARTNER.
AAAAAAAAHHHH!
FOOM
YOU ALMOST LOST ME.
WE ALMOST LOST EACH OTHER.

MY FAVORITE KIND OF BIKE HAS A FOUR-STROKE ENGINE.
IT GENERATES A HELL OF A LOT OF POWER AS IT WORKS ITS WAY THROUGH INTAKE, COMPRESSION, IGNITION, *EXHAUST.*
ALL IN A HOT SECOND.
WE GOT FOUR FISTS BETWEEN US.
LET'S *POWER* OUR WAY THROUGH THIS ROUGH PATCH OF ROAD!
HOAARRRR!!

THE COUNCIL OF NIGHT MAGICIANS WAS TASKED WITH MAINTAINING THE **BALANCE** OF LIGHT AND DARK.
AND I DON'T DISAGREE WITH THE NOTION.
I JUST OPPOSE BEING REGULATED.
THE LIGHT ALLOWS FOR A FEAST OF SHADOWS, AFTER ALL.
AND WE'RE HERE TO FEED AND GROW.
YOUR LITTLE COUNCIL IS NO LONGER RELEVANT, A CASUALTY ON THE ROAD TO PROGRESS.
CONSIDER YOURSELF RETIRED.

HAYDEN'S FALLS. THE CAVE INN MOTEL. THE RED ROAD. THE CIRCUS OF CRIME. HELL'S BACKBONE. NOW CHICAGO.
I'VE BEEN TRAVELING A LONG ROAD, AND I'M NOWHERE NEAR THE END OF IT.
BUT AS GHOST RIDER, I CAN SENSE HIM OUT THERE. THE CAUSE OF IT ALL. THE ROOT CANCER THAT'S METASTASIZED ACROSS THE COUNTRY.
BLACKHEART.
IF THIS IS GOING TO BE MY LIFE--IF I'M GOING TO MAKE THE MOST OF MY TIME HERE ON THIS ROCK--I FIGURE I NEED TO STOP CALLING THE SPIRIT A CURSE...
...AND ACCEPT INSTEAD THAT IT'S A *PART* OF ME.
AN UGLY, MEAN, COMPLICATED PART OF ME, BUT A PART OF ME NONETHELESS.
IT'S NOT SOMETHING I CAN HATE OR BLAME OR EXCUSE AWAY.
IT'S WHO I AM.
HELL YEAH.

THERE ISN'T JOHNNY BLAZE *AND* THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE.
THERE'S THE *GHOST RIDER.*
WE'RE THE GHOST RIDER.
FORGED TOGETHER IN HELLFIRE.
WE'RE NOT THE GOOD GUY IN ANY STORY.
WE'RE THE *MONSTER.*
AND SOMETIMES, A MONSTER IS WHAT YOU NEED TO FIGHT OTHER MONSTERS.

YOU TOOK ME OFF THE ROAD.
NOW IT'S MY TURN TO RETURN THE FAVOR.
NO...
YOU'RE ALREADY ON THE EXIT RAMP.
FWOOOSH
NOW GO TO HELL.

HE'S GONE.
BLACKHEART MIGHT BE. BUT IT AIN'T OVER.
IT'S NEVER OVER.
THIS ISN'T ABOUT ONE DEMON OR ONE MAN OR ONE ANYTHING. IT'S ABOUT ALL OF US.
EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING HAS A SHADOW.
EVEN THIS COUNTRY.
THAT'S WHY *WE'RE* HERE.

F.B.I. HEADQUARTERS. WASHINGTON, DC.
ARE YOU @#$%& KIDDING ME?
THIS IS @#$%, CRUX.
YOU'RE SHUTTING ME DOWN?
AFTER EVERYTHING WE'VE BEEN THROUGH? AFTER EVERYTHING WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED?
WHAT, EXACTLY, HAVE YOU ACCOMPLISHED, TALIA? BECAUSE I'M HONESTLY NOT CERTAIN.
YOU READ THE #$%& BRIEFING.
BUT...IT'S ALL *HEARSAY.* THERE'S NO CONTRABAND IN STORAGE, NOBODY TRIED AND LOCKED UP.
I HAVE NOTHING CONCRETE TO GO ON BUT MONEY.
AND YOU'VE BURNED YOUR WAY THROUGH A WHOLE LOT OF IT.

I'M HEADING TO SAVANNAH TO DO SOME MORE INVESTIGATIVE WORK, AND YOU'D BE VERY, VERY SMART TO KEEP THAT ACCOUNT LIVE.
THIS ISN'T S.H.I.E.L.D. I'M NOT NICK FURY.
NO... YOU'RE *NOT.*
I'M CALLING WITH GOOD NEWS.

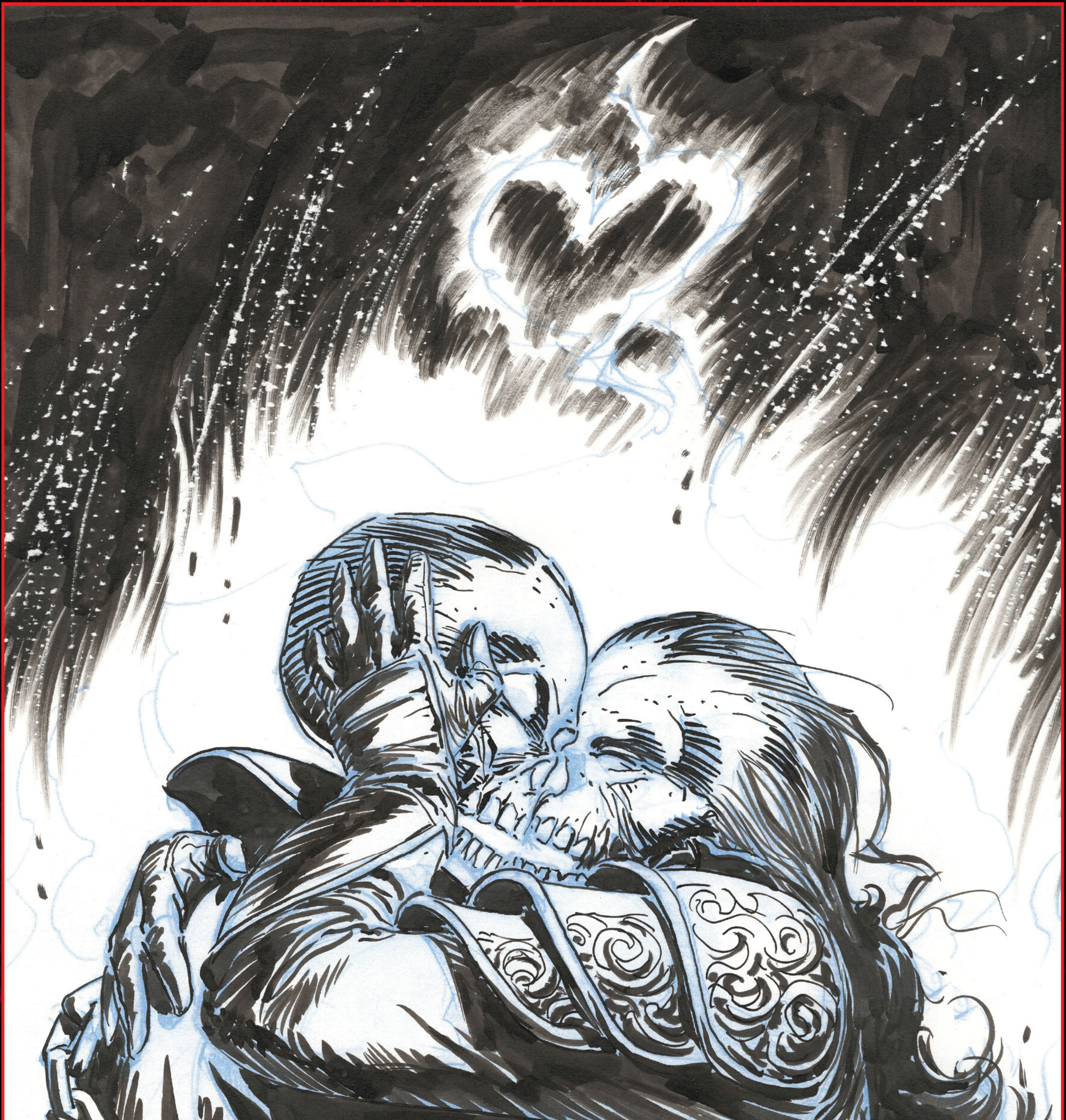
HOW'D THAT GO?
EXACTLY AS EXPECTED.
DOESN'T CHANGE NOTHING. WE STILL DO WHAT WE NEED TO DO.
TAKE A LOAD OFF FOR A SEC. WE DON'T NEED TO ALWAYS MOVE AT FREEWAY SPEEDS.
YOU JUST WANT TO SIT IN THE SUN? SURROUNDED BY FLOWERS AND CHILDREN? ARE YOU KIDDING ME? THIS IS DISGUSTING.
NAH, IT'S ALL RIGHT.
SOMETIMES, LIVING THE WAY WE DO, YOU'VE GOT TO STOP AND REMIND YOURSELF WHY YOU'RE DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
I HATE YOU FOR THIS.
"I'M VERY PLEASED TO HEAR FROM YOU, DIRECTOR CRUX."

EVERYTHING WE DISCUSS FROM THIS POINT FORWARD IS CONSIDERED *TOP SECRET.* UNDERSTAND?
I TAKE IT WE HAVE THE GREEN LIGHT?
YOUR LAB IS OFFICIALLY CONTRACTED TO PROVIDE SECURITY AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, DR. DIYU.
MONEY COMES WITH THAT, SO DOES DISCRETION, AND SO DOES ABSOLUTE *LOYALTY.*
I NEED TO WORK WITH SOMEBODY WHO CAN KEEP RECEIPTS, MAINTAIN TRANSPARENCY AND STAY THE HELL OUT OF THE HEADLINES.
WE ARE *SCIENTISTS.* WE BELIEVE IN RULES, AND WE'RE NOT INTERESTED IN THE SPOTLIGHT.
THEN I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING TOGETHER. ON A TRIAL BASIS, OF COURSE.
DR. DIYU?
WE'RE READY TO RUN THE TEST.

IF YOU COULD JUST SIGN OFF HERE WITH YOUR APPROVAL.
ENDLESS PAPERWORK. MEMOS. GRANT PROPOSALS. PROGRESS REPORTS.
HELL, I'VE DETERMINED, IS A BUREAUCRACY.
INFERNAL LABS
BUT I THINK ALL OUR HARD WORK IS ABOUT TO PAY OFF.
I HOPE THIS TEST SUBJECT LIVES. WHAT'S HIS NAME?
DANNY...
DANNY KETCH.
NEXT: NOWHERE MAN!

Welcome to
Hell

Ghost Rider: Vengeance Forever Variant by PEPE LARRAZ


ADAM KUBERT
JOE KUBERT '11

Ghost Rider: Vengeance Forever Variant by ADAM & JOE KUBERT

#7 Variant by MARIA WOLF & MIKE SPICER

#8 Miracleman Variant by BRYAN HITCH & ALEX SINCLAIR

#8 X-Treme Variant by MARTIN COCCOLO & JESUS ABURTOV

#9 Variant by LUKE ROSS & NOLAN WOODARD

#9 Marvel Universe Variant by PEACH MOMOKO

MARVEL SPOTLIGHT
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
CLASSIC HOMAGE VARIANT EDITION
10
LGY #253
MARVEL SPOTLIGHT ON...
GHOST RIDER™
IS HE ALIVE.. OR DEAD?
A LEGEND IS BORN!
noto after PLOOG
THE MOST SUPERNATURAL SUPERHERO OF ALL!

#10 Variant by PHIL NOTO

#10 Variant by DAN PANOSIAN

"Benjamin Percy knocked it out of the park." – Comic Watch

GHOST RIDER VS. WOLVERINE!

'NUFF SAID!

THERE'S SOMEBODY ELSE OUT THERE LIKE JOHNNY BLAZE, somebody who knows what it means to suffer – to feel sickened by the pain they've inflicted on the world. His name is Logan. After the motorcycle rally at Hell's Backbone, Wolverine and Ghost Rider are brought together – but are they enemies or allies in the war against the shadow country? Meanwhile, there's a new splinter group within the F.B.I. charged with quelling the rise in supernatural activity, helmed by Agent Talia Warroad. And she's aiming to enlist the dangerous power of the Spirit of Vengeance! Plus: Still reeling from his time in Hayden's Falls, Blaze seeks the counsel of a seer named Necro the Tattooist, who uses his needle to bring dark truths to the surface about the legacy of the Ghost Rider!

COLLECTING ***GHOST RIDER (2022) #6-10*** AND ***GHOST RIDER: VENGEANCE FOREVER*** –
BY BENJAMIN PERCY, BRENT PEEPLES, CORY SMITH, DAVID CUTLER, JUAN JOSÉ RYP,
OREN JUNIOR AND BRYAN VALENZA.

T+

Jack.T.Ripper
BLOODY MARVELOUS!